

Budget Workshop – Approved Minutes
March 11, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Central Services

Present Board Members: Jenny Emery (via telephone), Mark Fiorentino, Melissa Migliaccio, David Peling, Sarah Thrall, Rosemarie Weber, Brandon Webster, and Dwaritha Ramesh (Student Representative).

Absent Board Members: Rosemarie Weber and Jack DeGray (Student Representative)

Melissa Migliaccio called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

I. Budget Workshop: FY21 Administrative Budget

The Board continued to discuss the FY21 Administrative Budget presented on March 4, 2020. Dr. Grossman stated the FY21 Administrative Budget is going in at 2.92%. He stated just to roll over costs including contractual costs, the budget increase would be 1.77% and after adding in Q&D and tuition and transportation for special education, the standing still number is 2.75%. Dr. Grossman reviewed questions from the Board including special education costs over the past five years; items not included in the budget; small capital fund budget; and purchases of PE and musical equipment.

Jenny Emery had a question on the slide regarding what is not in the budget and wondered specifically about the Special Education Supervisor position. Dr. Grossman stated it would be a valuable position and that the Director of Pupil Services has a difficult job managing and working with special education teachers and case workers. All of these employees, in addition to teaching assistants fall under the direction of the Director of Pupil Services. There are currently 275 special education students in the District and each one has an Individual Education Plan that we have to ensure we are meeting. Dr. Grossman stated he feels as a Board there needs to be more conversations about this topic. The addition of the Special Education Supervisor position would put the budget at a 3.25%. Melissa Migliaccio inquired if adding the supervisor position would end up saving money on special education costs in the short term. Dr. Grossman stated he did not know the answer to that question if it would in this budget cycle; however, he feels it would save money in the years to come by offering programming in our own district to bring students back.

Jenny Emery stated if this is a priority to tackle this issue, she would like to fully understand not funding this position before she votes on the budget. Mark Fiorentino stated he supports doing what we need to do and supports the decision to set it aside. He would much rather see Dr. Grossman get the time he needs to get things in place as it is a significant change. Ms. Emery inquired if Dr. Grossman feels comfortable that this budget provides him the time and resources to do the evaluation he needs to do. Dr. Grossman stated, yes, and it provides an opportunity to work with the Director of Pupil Services to come up with a plan.

A motion was made by Mark Fiorentino and seconded by Brandon Webster to amend the agenda to add public comment on the budget. This motion passed unanimously at 7:37 p.m.

II. Public Comment

Susan Patricelli Regan, Hungary Hill Road, Granby, CT – Ms. Patricelli thanked the Board and administration for their hard work on the budget. She had a couple of questions for the Board: 1) With regard to the IDEA grant she inquired about the portion of salaries (\$40K) which need to be assumed by the general fund. Dr. Grossman stated that was listed in the Plus One Budget document and is correct; 2) Equipment and Maintenance purchases of \$316K, specifically, three zero-turn lawnmowers for \$48K, Ms. Regan inquired if the Public Works Department could give any assistance to save money. Anna Robbins stated the District does collaborate with the Public Works Department but, unfortunately, in order to help out the schools, they would need to add staff to do so; and, 3) Ms. Regan inquired about the \$91,077 slated for the purchase of replacement of existing technology and if any funds can be garnered from the sale or exchange of old equipment or has that already been factored in. Melissa Migliaccio stated the District does get a good life's use out of devices and by the time the District is asking for replacement devices they are at the end of their life. Ms. Regan inquired if the devices can be donated to veterans, etc. Anna Robbins stated, yes, that is the current practice and equipment is donated where there is a need.

Bill Regan, Hungary Hill Road, Granby, CT – Mr. Regan had a question about the special education budget with regard to revenue from other towns. Dr. Grossman stated tuition received is for out-of-town students who live outside of Granby but get special education services in Granby. Mr. Regan also asked if the Quality & Diversity (Q&D) Fund could be explained. Dr. Grossman stated the Q&D Fund is funds the District receives from Hartford for students who come to the Granby Public Schools. There is a formula used for 4% enrollment from Hartford, Granby receives \$8K for students in Grades 1-12 and \$10K for Kindergarten students. Mr. Regan inquired if the District is looking to reduce the funds or that the funds may simply go away. Melissa Migliaccio stated the funds got cut last year. The Q&D Fund is something the Board would like to rely on it but the financial factors that go into it are out of the Board's control.

Melissa Migliaccio stated the questions the Board has posed to the superintendent have been answered and the Board and has heard from the public.

Mark Fiorentino stated he will not be at the meeting but will call in and that he supports the budget and stated the job gets tougher every year. There is very little in the budget beyond the standing still number and it is a very responsible budget. He stated he intends to pass the budget on to the Board of Finance.

Brandon Webster stated he believes this is a good budget; however, he would like some more time to reflect on the budget.

Dave Peling stated he supports the budget.

Sarah Thrall stated she appreciates the fact the budget is coming in under the guideline and how Dr. Grossman accomplished this in his short tenure.

Jenny Emery stated her concerns about the longer term perspective in terms of scheduling of salary changes, etc. She stated she does not want to lose any opportunity as things may get tougher next year.

Melissa Migliaccio stated the Plus One Budget was presented at 3.69%, the BOF guideline is 3% and this budget comes in under that and does not cut services but addresses class sizes which are critical to this Board by adding a Kindergarten Teacher. Ms. Migliaccio stated he is impressed with Dr. Grossman hitting the ground running and being responsive to our vision and mission, teachers, class sizes, and technology – it's a delicate balance.

Dwaritha Ramesh, Student Representative, stated she feels it is a very sensible budget and feels the Math Interventionist at the middle school is especially important considering the test scores at the middle school.

A motion was made by Dave Peling and seconded by Sarah Thrall to adjourn the meeting. This motion passed unanimously at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Powell
Board Recorder